

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF COMPOSING BASED ON INSPIRATION OF INDONESIAN TRADITIONAL MUSIC BEYOND THE GAMELAN<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

An emerging issue in the world of Indonesian contemporary classical music is the overrepresentation of the gamelan, the famed set of musical instruments of Java and Bali. The widespread popularity of the gamelan has persevered, especially in Western art music circles, since the late nineteenth century, when its sounds first caught the interest of Claude Debussy at the 1889 Paris Exposition. Since then, the gamelan has inspired many Western and Eastern composers, particularly with respect to its unique timbres and sonorities. Although the gamelan has been justifiably recognized as a source of inspiration to many composers, it represents but one of the traditional musical styles of Indonesia—many of which have received far less attention. This article therefore has two primary aims: 1) to challenge and encourage composers to see Indonesian music in a broader perspective, to explore and find new sources of musical inspiration outside the borders of Java and Bali; and 2) to present discussions of two recent compositions which can be seen as examples in this regard: Ananda Sukarlan's *Rapsodia Nusantara* and Nathan Iskandar's *Indonesian Suite*.

**Keywords:** Gamelan/ Indonesia/ Folk Song/ Traditional Dance Music/ Composition

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## Introduction

From the late nineteenth century to the present, most contemporary classical compositions featuring Indonesian traditional musical influences, including those composed by both Indonesian and non-Indonesian composers, have primarily revolved around the gamelan, which is the most prominent traditional instrument set well-known in the regions of Java and Bali. Furthermore, the majority of published research about Indonesian music by Western scholars has historically focused on the gamelan. Jennifer Fraser notes that scholarship on the musical tradition of Indonesia has long focused on practices from Java and Bali, including the famed gamelan traditions, at the expense of the wide diversity of other musical forms within the archipelago.<sup>2</sup> Sarah Weiss has also noted a similar disparity regarding the study of Indonesian performance arts within Indonesian institutions by noting “an institutionalized promulgation of a performing arts hierarchy with Javanese aesthetics and genres at the top.”<sup>3</sup> While the work of Fraser and Weiss, as well as some other recent publications—such as the “Indonesia Issue” in vol. 34, no. 2 of the journal *Asian Music*<sup>4</sup> and R. Anderson Sutton’s 2002 book on music of South Sulawesi<sup>5</sup>—have begun to address this issue, the observation by Indonesian pianist Henoeh Kristianto that we lack a comprehensive chronicle of the history of Indonesian traditional music still largely rings true.<sup>6</sup>

It seems clear that there is an opportunity for the creation of scholarly and artistic works that shift the focus from the gamelan of Java and Bali to other regions of Indonesia where there are still lots of “hidden treasures” yet to be discovered, studied, and recorded extensively. It is also worth noting that, culturally and musically, the rise in international popularity of gamelan music from Java and Bali in the last two centuries may be at least in part due to the well-documented historical event of French composer Claude Debussy becoming fascinated by the Javanese gamelan when he visited the 1889 Paris Exposition (World’s Fair), after which he then decided to use the gamelan as his inspiration for pieces

<sup>2</sup> “Gongs and Pop Songs: Sounding Minangkabau in Indonesia,” EBSCOhost, Accessed in February 1, 2020, [https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.ejournal.mahidol.ac.th/ehost/detail?sid=1d8e1526-50e0-45b9-99e7-28387b07ff17@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\\_v&rid=0#AN=1033113&db=nlebk](https://web-s-ebSCOhost-com.ejournal.mahidol.ac.th/ehost/detail?sid=1d8e1526-50e0-45b9-99e7-28387b07ff17@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_v&rid=0#AN=1033113&db=nlebk).

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Weiss, “Review Essay: Getting beyond Java: New Studies in Indonesian Music,” *Ethnomusicology* 51, no. 1 (2007): 135. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20174505>.

<sup>4</sup> Suryadi, “Minangkabau Commercial Cassettes and the Cultural Impact of the Recording Industry in West Sumatra,” *Asian Music* 34, no. 2 (2003): 51-89. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4098457>.

<sup>5</sup> R. Anderson Sutton, *Calling Back the Spirit: Music, Dance, and Cultural Politics in Lowland South Sulawesi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 57.

<sup>6</sup> Henoeh R. Kristianto, “An Eastern Infusion: Indonesian and Western Elements in Ananda Sukarlan’s *Rapsodia Nusantara 1-5*.” (Master’s thesis, University of Sydney, 2012), 3.

such as “Pagodes” from *Estampes*. In addition, Java and Bali are the two islands which control and make up most of the Indonesian economy. In Java, Jakarta stands as Indonesia’s capital city, whereas the island of Bali is Indonesia’s main tourist destination both locally and internationally, therefore significantly affecting the Indonesian tourism economy at large.

## Composers Influenced by the Gamelan

Some of the most popular gamelan-influenced pieces written by Western composers include Leopold Godowsky’s *Java Suite* (1925) and Claude Debussy’s aforementioned first movement of his *Estampes* (1903), which is called “Pagodes.” Some other Western compositions which took inspiration from the gamelan include György Ligeti’s *Galamb Borong* for solo piano (1985-2001), Erik Satie’s *Gnossienne* for piano (1889-1890), Colin McPhee’s *Tabuh-tabuhan* for orchestra and two pianos (1936), and Lou Harrison’s *Suite for Violin and American Gamelan* (1973).

A few of the most prominent Indonesian composers who have been significantly inspired by the gamelan include Trisutji Kamal (b. 1936) and Jaya Suprana (b. 1949). Kamal’s compositions are for piano and chamber instrumentation, focusing mainly on gamelan-inspired works such as her *Sunda Seascapes* (1990) and the Islamic musical traditions in Indonesia, one of which is realized in her piece *Persembahan* (1992).<sup>7</sup> Suprana’s piano works also reflect heavy Javanese music influence and, occasionally, a few other traditional music elements from Indonesia.<sup>8</sup>

Some other emerging Indonesian composers such as Budhi Ngurah (b. 1958) and Marisa Hartanto (b. 1986) have recently written and performed chamber and orchestral works blending Western and Indonesian styles. Ngurah is a Javanese-born composer largely influenced by the middle-eastern Javanese music scene, and while a number of Hartanto’s compositions take admirable inspiration from Indonesian music, she is yet to compose a piece which is specifically comprised of a balanced mixture of Indonesian traditional musical elements from various parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Hartanto’s *Bali Miniatures*, as the title of the work implies, suggests the strong influence of the Balinese gamelan music. Javanese-style musical resemblances can also be found in another of her pieces, *Ngasirah (Ibunda Kartini)*, which portrays the mother of the prominent Indonesian historical figure, Kartini. *Beethoven di Bandung*, *Sundanese Flute*, and *Legenda Sangkuriang*

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<sup>7</sup> “Trisutji Kamal,” Kelola, Accessed in December 3, 2019, <http://kelola.or.id/seniman/trisutji-kamal/>.

<sup>8</sup> “Rayakan Ultah, Jaya Suprana Rilis 18 Komposisi Musik,” Hendro D. Situmorang, Berita Satu, Accessed in January 28, 2014, <https://www.beritasatu.com/hiburan/163442/rayakan-ultah-jaya-suprana-rilis-18-komposisi-musik>.

are also recent works by Hartanto which are influenced by Sundanese (West Java) gamelan music.

## Traditional Musical Instruments Outside Java and Bali

Indonesian traditional dance is heavily associated with its instrumental accompaniment. Across the Indonesian archipelago, which contains over three hundred ethnic groups, there are a large number of musical instruments specific to different cultures, making it logically impossible to list them all. However, to balance the previous discussion of the gamelan, it is important to briefly summarize some of the most prominent traditional musical instruments from other regions in Indonesia outside of Java and Bali, such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, Papua, and Nusa Tenggara.

**Instruments of Sumatra.** Sumatra is one of the largest islands of Indonesia. It consists of ten provinces, which are Aceh, Bengkulu, Jambi, Lampung, Riau, Riau Islands, Bangka Belitung Islands, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, and North Sumatra. Table 1 lists some of the most prominent traditional instruments of Sumatra. For the purpose of an overview, only one instrument from each of its provinces is listed:

Table 1 Several traditional instruments of Sumatra

Source: by author

Provinces of Sumatra	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
Aceh	<i>Rapai</i>	Percussion (membranophone)
Bengkulu	<i>DOL</i>	Percussion (membranophone)
Jambi	<i>Serangko</i>	Wind (aerophone)
Lampung	<i>Gamolan</i>	Percussion (idiophone)
Riau	<i>Gambus</i>	String (chordophone)
Riau Islands	<i>Bebano</i>	Percussion (membranophone)
Bangka Belitung Islands	<i>Dambus</i>	String (chordophone)
West Sumatra	<i>Saluang</i>	Wind (aerophone)

Provinces of Sumatra	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
South Sumatra	<i>Burdah / Drum Oku</i>	Percussion (membranophone)
North Sumatra	<i>Oloan</i>	Percussion (membranophone)

**Instruments of Kalimantan.** Kalimantan is also one of the largest islands of Indonesia. It consists of five provinces, which are West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and North Kalimantan. Table 2 lists some of the most prominent traditional instruments from each of the provinces in Kalimantan.

Table 2 Several traditional instruments of Kalimantan

Source: by author

Provinces of Kalimantan	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
West Kalimantan	<i>Sape(h)</i>	String (chordophone)
Central Kalimantan	<i>(Gong) Garantung</i>	Percussion (idiophone)
South Kalimantan	<i>Kasapi</i>	String (chordophone)
East Kalimantan	<i>Jatung Utang</i>	Percussion (idiophone)
North Kalimantan	<i>Babun</i>	Percussion (membranophone)

**Instruments of Sulawesi.** Sulawesi, also known as *Celebes*, is another major island of Indonesia. It consists of six provinces, which are North Sulawesi, Gorontalo, Central Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, South Sulawesi and Southeast Sulawesi. Table 3 lists some of the most prominent traditional instruments from each of the provinces in Sulawesi.

Table 3 Several traditional instruments of Sulawesi

Source: by author

Provinces of Sulawesi	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
North Sulawesi	<i>Kolintang</i>	Percussion (idiophone)
Gorontalo	<i>Gambusi</i>	String (chordophone)
Central Sulawesi	<i>Ganda</i>	Percussion (membranophone)
West Sulawesi	<i>Gongga Lima</i>	Percussion (idiophone)
South Sulawesi	<i>Tolindo / Popondi</i>	String (chordophone)
Southeast Sulawesi	<i>Baasi</i>	Percussion (idiophone)

**Instruments of the Maluku Islands.** The Maluku Islands, also known as the *Moluccas*, is a region of Indonesia consisting of two provinces, which are Maluku and North Maluku. Table 4 lists some of the most prominent traditional instruments from each of the provinces in the Maluku Islands.

Table 4 Several traditional instruments of the Maluku Islands

Source: by author

Provinces of the Maluku Islands	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
Maluku	<i>Arababu</i>	String (chordophone)
North Maluku	<i>Bambu Hitada</i>	Percussion (idiophone)

**Instruments of Western New Guinea (Papua).** The Western New Guinea, or also simply called “Papua” is the Indonesian part of the New Guinea island. It consists of two provinces, which are West Papua and Papua. Table 5 lists some of the most prominent traditional instruments from each of the provinces in Western New Guinea.

**Table 5 Several traditional instruments of Western New Guinea (Papua)**

Source: by author

Provinces of Western New Guinea (Papua)	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
West Papua	<i>Yi</i>	Percussion ( <i>idiophone</i> )
Papua	<i>Fuu</i>	Wind ( <i>aerophone</i> )

**Instruments of the Nusa Tenggara Region.** The Nusa Tenggara region, also known as the *Lesser Sunda Islands*, is a region of eastern Indonesia. It is made up of two provinces which are West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara. Table 6 lists some of the most prominent traditional instruments from each of the provinces in Nusa Tenggara.

**Table 6 Several traditional instruments of the Nusa Tenggara Region**

Source: by author

Provinces of the Nusa Tenggara Region	Name of Traditional Instrument	Instrument Family and Classification
West Nusa Tenggara	<i>Gendang Beleg</i>	Percussion ( <i>membranophone</i> )
East Nusa Tenggara	<i>Sasando</i>	String ( <i>chordophone</i> )

The instruments listed above are just some of the many instruments outside of the gamelan that are used in Indonesian traditional music from various regions. The wide variety of musical instruments and styles from areas of Indonesia outside of Java and Bali indicates that there is a great need for documenting and preserving the breadth and diversity of Indonesian musical traditions, which can be realized in various forms.



## Traditional Music Across the Indonesian Archipelago

With over 300 ethnic groups, it is without doubt that Indonesia is culturally and musically diverse—not only because of the large number of languages spoken within these groups, but also because traditional Indonesian music is quite varied in terms of its musical languages, aesthetics, and cultural purposes.<sup>9</sup> Two prominent categories of traditional music in Indonesia are folk songs and traditional dance music, each of which has distinct musical characteristics as well as important functions within the society (ceremonial, entertainment, etc.). The following sections summarize some prominent aspects of Indonesian folk songs and traditional dance music and then discuss how contemporary classical works drawing inspiration from these two types of traditional Indonesian music can be realized by examining two recent compositions that serve as examples in this regard: Ananda Sukarlan's *Rapsodia Nusantara* and Nathan Iskandar's *Indonesian Suite*.

**On folk songs.** The Indonesian archipelago is rich in folk songs. Its richness results from the musical creativity of the local people as well as from foreign influences.<sup>10</sup> *Keroncong* and *dangdut* are two of the most prominent products of such international cultural encounters. *Keroncong* was influenced by Portuguese musical traditions,<sup>11</sup> whereas *dangdut* featured influences from both Hindi and Malay orchestras and then became a popular musical genre in Indonesia.<sup>12</sup> While many types of Indonesian folk songs are primarily local phenomena, some have made it to the international stage, especially through presentation in international diplomatic events, art exhibitions, and international music (instrumental/choir) competitions. Such examples are “Ampar-Ampar Pisang” from South Kalimantan province, “Anak Kambing Saya” and “Potong Bebek Angsa” from East Nusa Tenggara province, and “Soleram” from Riau province.<sup>13</sup>

One important way that these folk traditions can be preserved and disseminated to new audiences is through pieces written by Indonesian composers that draw inspiration from and integrate such folk traditions into their works. A recent example of an Indonesian

<sup>9</sup> “The Music of Indonesia,” James Nissen, Band on the Wall, Accessed in April 1, 2020, <https://www.guidetothe-worldofmusic.com/articles/people-and-places/the-music-of-indonesia/>.

<sup>10</sup> David D. Harnish and Anne K. Rasmussen, *Divine Inspirations : Music and Islam in Indonesia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

<sup>11</sup> “‘Keroncong’: Freedom music from Portuguese descendants,” The Jakarta Post, Accessed in June 16, 2011, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/06/15/'keroncong'-freedom-music-portuguese-descendants.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Ariel Heryanto, *Popular Culture in Indonesia : Fluid Identities in Post-Authoritarian Politics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 13.

<sup>13</sup> “4 Internationally Recognized Traditional Indonesian Songs,” Islahuddin, Brilio, Accessed in September 10, 2016, <https://en.brilio.net/wow/4-internationally-recognized-indonesian-traditional-songs-1609100.html>.



composer paying homage to such folk music traditions is Ananda Sukarlan's *Rapsodia Nusantara*, a set of piano pieces, each of which adopts folk song(s) from one (or sometimes more) of the 34 provinces of Indonesia. As of February 2021, the composer has reported through a personal interview that he has finished composing 34 pieces of the *Rapsodia Nusantara*, and the numbers apparently are still growing.

Ananda Sukarlan's *Rapsodia Nusantara* showcases a wide variety of Indonesian folk tunes adopted and developed into a fully established collection of contemporary classical solo piano pieces.



Figure 1 Excerpt from "Jali-jali".

Source: by author

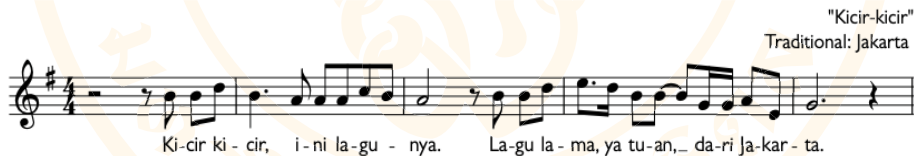


Figure 2 Excerpt from "Kicir-kicir".

Source: by author

In his *Rapsodia Nusantara no. 1*, Sukarlan adopts two popular Indonesian folk tunes as the main melodic themes: "Jali-jali" (shown in Figure 1) and "Kicir-kicir" (shown in Figure 2), which originated from Batavia (now Jakarta). Figure 3 provides an example of how he adopts the theme from "Kicir-kicir" in the piece:

Rapsodia Nusantara no. 1, mm. 24-28  
Ananda Sukarlan

Figure 3 Melodic theme of “Kicir-kicir” (right hand) in *Rapsodia Nusantara no. 1*.

Source: *Rapsodia Nusantara 1-5*, by Ananda Sukarlan, page 3.

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As seen in Figure 3, the right-hand notes imitate the melodic lines of “Kicir-kicir” almost exactly like the example shown in Figure 2. Although the “Kicir-kicir” melody is integrated into a musical idiom that is clearly pianistic in nature, with its added harmonies in the right hand and rising octave pattern in the left hand, the melodic quotation is readily perceivable because the pitch materials here are diatonic, the melody is quoted rather directly, and the texture is homophonic. Figure 4 shows how the melodic theme from “Jali-jali” is later realized in the same piece as well:



Figure 4 Melodic theme of “Jali-jali” (right hand, mm. 33-34) and “Kicir-kicir” (left hand, mm. 33-35) in *Rapsodia Nusantara no. 1*.

Source: *Rapsodia Nusantara 1-5*, by Ananda Sukarlan, page 3.

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In fact, Figure 4 shows that Sukarlan has actually integrated allusions to both “Jali-jali” and “Kicir-kicir” into the same passage. In mm. 33-34, the right-hand notes follow the melodic contour of the first three measures of Figure 1 rather closely, thus referencing the “Jali-jali” folk melody (although less directly than the “Kicir-kicir” melodic reference shown in Figure 3). The left-hand notes in mm. 33-35 then clearly imitate the “Kicir-kicir” theme shown in the first four measures of Figure 2. Sukarlan has set the “Jali-jali” and “Kicir-kicir” melodies polyphonically in this passage and the pitch materials here are no longer diatonic, with the whole-tone collection employed instead. Within this piece, we can therefore see examples of Sukarlan’s multifaceted approach to treating the folk melodies. The passage in Figure 3 is a rather straightforward diatonic melodic quotation within a homophonic piano texture, while the passage in Figure 4 integrates the folk melodies into a style that reflects the influence of modern Western art music techniques much more prominently.

Sukarlan’s *Rapsodia Nusantara no. 2* then presents an embodiment of two children’s folk songs from different regions: “Tokecang” from West Java and “Cublak-cublak Suweng” from Central Java, while *no. 3* adopts the folk tunes from Maluku entitled “Sarinande” and “Rasa Sayange.” *No. 4* borrows the melodic theme from “Buka Pintu,” a folk song originating from the city of Ambon in Maluku. *No. 5* adopts themes from “Anging Mamiri” and “Marencong-rencong,” two folk songs derived from South Sulawesi, and the remaining

pieces in the *Rapsodia Nusantara* follow similar procedures. Table 7 lists the derivation of Indonesian folk songs used for *Rapsodia Nusantara no. 1-25*:

**Table 7 Adoption of Indonesian folk songs in *Rapsodia Nusantara***

Source: by author

<i>Rapsodia Nusantara</i> No.	Folk Songs Used	Province of Origin
1	"Jali-jali"	Special Capital Region of Jakarta
	"Kicir-kicir"	
2	"Tokecang"	West Java
	"Cublak-cublak Suweng"	Central Java
3	"Sarinande"	Maluku
	"Rasa Sayange"	
4	"Buka Pintu"	Maluku
5	"Anging Mamiri"	South Sulawesi
	"Pakarena"	
6	"Bungong Jeumpa"	Aceh
7	"Yamko Rambe Yamko"	Papua
	"Apuse"	
8	"O Ina Ni Keke"	North Sulawesi
9	"Ampar-ampar Pisang"	South Kalimantan
	"Paris Barantai"	
10	"Janger"	Bali
11	"Anak Kambing Saya"	East Nusa Tenggara
	"Bolelebo"	
12	"Gelang Sipaku Gelang"	West Sumatra
13	"Sipatokaan"	North Sulawesi
14	"Rambadia"	North Sumatra
15	"Ngekham"	Lampung
16	"Rek Ayo Rek"	East Java
17	"Lir Ilir"	Central Java
18	"Soleram"	Riau
19	"Manuk Dadali"	West Java
20	"Padang Wulan"	Central Java
21	"Goro Gorone"	Maluku
22	"Manari Manasai"	Central Kalimantan

<i>Rapsodia Nusantara</i> No.	Folk Songs Used	Province of Origin
23	“Batanghari”	Jambi
	“Angso Duo”	
24	“Domidow”	Papua
25	“Yok Miak”	Bangka Belitung Islands

While the musical ideas of *Rapsodia Nusantara* have precedents in a number of folk-influenced piano works by Western composers such as Liszt, Brahms, and Bartók, the fact that most of the folk songs it references are well-known among Indonesians has been a significant factor in the success of this musical work and helps to further preserve and disseminate the local folk song traditions. These folk songs, with their simple and memorable melodic passages, generally represent pitch and rhythmic movements which are unique to their specific regions. Combining these elements with Western conventions of music composition, the folk-inspired pieces from *Rapsodia Nusantara* have begun to enter the repertoires of performing pianists both within and outside of Indonesia. However, the use of Indonesian folk songs as a source of inspiration that can be observed in *Rapsodia Nusantara* offers just one possibility for expanding the horizon of Indonesian-influenced contemporary compositions. Another valuable source of inspiration can be found in traditional Indonesian dance music.

**On traditional dance music.** Apart from folk songs, Indonesian cultural diversity in the arts is also reflected in its traditional dances. While Indonesian dances are generally divided into two types—traditional dance and contemporary dance, this article focuses on the traditional side. According to Indonesian patrons, they are classified into two different genres—court dance and folk dance.<sup>14</sup> The court dance genre is focused more on royalty, which directly relates to the values of sophistication, spirituality, and refinement, while the folk-dance genre is more focused on entertainment and social values. As Indonesian society began to modernize, these two different genres at times began to blend with each other, making these dances considered more as part of a cultural heritage rather than having a specific function as they did in the past.

Indonesian traditional dance music features a number of uniquely varied styles, owing to the fact that the ethnic diversity in Indonesia presents a great variety of musical instruments which produce different colors and tones. The musical identity of each ethnic group represented in these dance music traditions is distinct from the others in terms of various

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<sup>14</sup> “The Folk Dances,” Tourism of Indonesia, Accessed in April 1, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101124083455/http://indonesia-tourism.com/general/theatre.html>.

aspects such as pitch, rhythm, and musical complexity. This traditional music, whether it be realized in a folk song or dance music, is something that is descended and preserved across generations. As noted by Kristianto,<sup>15</sup> in order for it to be preserved for future generations, it will require a system of preservation either through government sponsorship or through a compositional transformation that promotes and modernizes these musical traditions. Such an example of a compositional approach can be found in Nathan Iskandar's *Indonesian Suite*.

*Indonesian Suite* is a mixed ensemble piece (encompassing woodwind, voice, percussion, and stringed instruments) consisting of eight movements, particularly focusing on the adoption of Indonesian traditional dance musical elements taken from the major regions of the Indonesian archipelago—Sulawesi, Java, Sumatra, Nusa Tenggara Region, Maluku Islands, Kalimantan, Western New Guinea (Papua), and Bali. The composer, Nathan Iskandar, is an Indonesian-born musician. Composed in 2019-2020, this piece takes a novel approach by drawing inspiration from elements of “welcoming dances” from the aforementioned regions. The music from several of these welcoming dances originated from tribal rituals whose present-day functions have been altered to become used as expressions of hospitality (through dance and music) from those specific tribes, while the rest came from relatively new compositions and/or modern renditions (in dance and music) which were created to serve a distinct purpose, as signs of acceptance and hospitality toward guests. The eight movements are named as follows: I. *Sulawesi*, II. *Java*, III. *Sumatra*, IV. *Nusa Tenggara*, V. *Maluku*, VI. *Kalimantan*, VII. *Papua*, VIII. *Bali*.

### “Welcoming Dance” Music

Throughout Indonesia's history, various kingdoms residing in the archipelago developed their own unique ways of welcoming foreign traders from across the globe.<sup>16</sup> A prominent aspect of Indonesian dance music is the fact that many of the diverse dances within this tradition have been specifically used for the purpose of welcoming guests. Known in Indonesia as *tarian penyambutan tamu* (“the dance of welcoming guests”), the “welcoming dance” is one of the few types of traditional Indonesian dance that has survived to the present time. In its modern purpose, it serves as a symbol of hospitality in welcoming distinguished guests such as government officials and business investors. A type of “welcoming

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<sup>15</sup> Henoch R. Kristianto, “An Eastern Infusion: Indonesian and Western Elements in Ananda Sukarlan's *Rapsodia Nusantara 1-5*.” (Master's thesis, University of Sydney, 2012), 25.

<sup>16</sup> “Tradisi Sambut Tamu di Nusantara,” GPriority Media, Accessed in November 14, 2018, <https://gpriority.co.id/tradisi-sambut-tamu-di-nusantara/>.

dance” can be found in almost every ethnic group in the Indonesian archipelago—whether it can be traced to royalty, derived from social norms, or a mixture of those two elements, it is evident in virtually every level of Indonesian society. As part of a work of art, the dance of welcoming guests reflects the Indonesian values of the harmony of life, which directly relates to human interaction and relationships with other humans, God, and nature. It has since become a national cultural symbol, projecting the traditions of hospitality, humility, and caring for one another.<sup>17</sup>

## Dance Music that Inspired Iskandar’s Indonesian Suite

In contrast to Sukarlan’s *Rapsodia Nusantara*, which adopts folk song melodies in the development of the various pieces within the composition, Iskandar applies traditional elements from the musical characteristics of “welcoming dance” music in his *Indonesian Suite*. While the overall concept can be found throughout virtually all of Indonesian society, individual “welcoming dance” traditions can be highly varied based on their locality of origin.

Table 8 “Welcoming Dance” Music That Inspired Iskandar’s *Indonesian Suite*

Source: by author

<i>Indonesian Suite</i> Movement No.	Name of “Welcoming Dance”*	Place of Origin
1	<i>Tari Bosara</i>	Sulawesi
2	<i>Tari Gambyong</i>	Java
3	<i>Tari Tepak Sirih</i>	Sumatra
4	<i>Tari Kataga</i>	Nusa Tenggara Region
5	<i>Tari Orlapei</i>	Maluku Islands
6	<i>Tari Gantar</i>	Kalimantan
7	<i>Tari Selamat Datang</i>	Western New Guinea (Papua)
8	<i>Tari Pendet</i>	Bali

\* “Tari” - Indonesian for “dance”

<sup>17</sup> “Tarian Penyambutan Tamu: Jamuan Istimewa dalam Gerak dan Musik,” Diversity.id, Accessed in January 17, 2019, <https://id.diversity.id/tarian-penyambutan-tamu-jamuan-istimewa-dalam-gerak-dan-musik>.



As an example, the first movement named *Sulawesi* takes inspiration from the music of *Tari Bosara*, a traditional dance originating from the province of South Sulawesi which is characterized as having fluid body movements. The music which accompanies the dance is characterized by soft, simple rhythms, slow tempo, and sometimes features contrasting dynamic sections.<sup>18</sup> Traditional drum (*gendang*), harp (*kecap*), and flute (*suling*), and *pui-pui* (aerophone instrument) are the instruments frequently used to perform the music.<sup>19</sup> Inspired by a video showing the *Tari Bosara*,<sup>20</sup> in which a prominent repetitive passage is introduced by string and woodwind instruments playing the melody with a moderately paced percussion accompaniment by the *gendang*, Iskandar imitates this repetitive melodic passage starting from the violin in mm. 1-4 of the *Sulawesi* movement, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5 Imitation of repetitive melodic passage of *Tari Bosara* in Sulawesi movement.

Source: *Indonesian Suite*, by Nathan Iskandar, page 1.

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This repeating musical phrase serves as the primary material and foundation of the whole movement. Moreover, the aforementioned percussion accompaniment is adapted using the congas in the movement, such as shown in Figure 6. The first page of the full score to the *Sulawesi* movement is then presented in Figure 7.

<sup>18</sup> "Tari Padduppa Bosara Tari Tradisional Sulawesi Selatan," Siti Muawanah, YouTube video, May 31, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGYZK14eq1E>.

<sup>19</sup> M. Zulham, "Makna Simbol Tari Paduppa (Tari Selamat Datang) Kota Palopo," *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa dan Sastra* 3, no. 2 (2017): 49.

<sup>20</sup> "Tari Padduppa Bosara Tari Tradisional Sulawesi Selatan," Siti Muawanah, YouTube video, May 31, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGYZK14eq1E>.

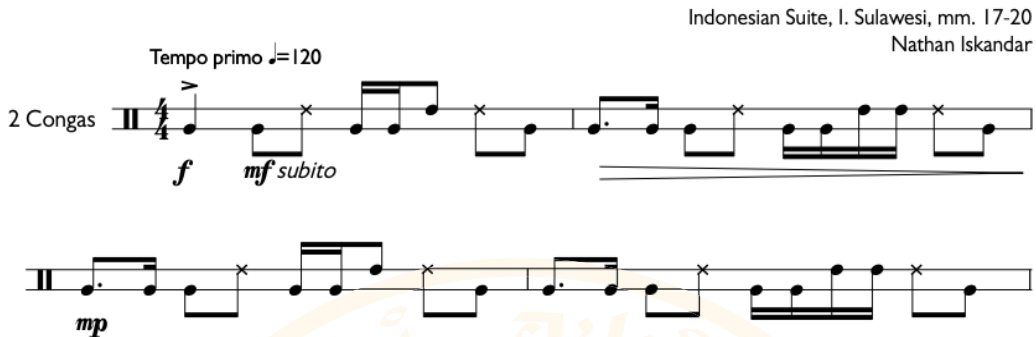


Figure 6 Imitation of percussion accompaniment of *Tari Bosara* in *Sulawesi* movement.

Source: *Indonesian Suite*, by Nathan Iskandar, page 2.

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The second movement named *Java* adopts the character of the music of *Tari Gambyong*, a form of classic Javanese dance originated from the region of Surakarta (a city in Central Java).<sup>21</sup> Its music is characterized as soft, unified together with the unique Javanese chanting voice of *sinden*.<sup>22</sup> The character and mood are the primary factors that Iskandar tries to create within the *Java* movement, combined together with the prominent use of the Javanese *pelog* pentatonic scale (a type of Javanese gamelan tuning system).

<sup>21</sup> "Tari Gambyong," Tari Nusantara, YouTube video, May 14, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBD2aSde\\_RE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aBD2aSde_RE).

<sup>22</sup> "Tari Gambyong," Pesona Indonesia, Accessed in April 16, 2020, <https://pesona-indonesia.info/tari-gambyong>.

Full Score

*In Celebration of the Cultural Diversity of Nusantara*

## Indonesian Suite

for mixed ensemble

I. SUJAWESI

**NATHAN ISKANDAR** (b. 1993)

All pitched instruments conduct  
fake "A" tuning session

I. SULAWESI

M. 1 starts at conductor's cue  
 $\text{♩} = 120$   
continue "tuning"

NATHAN ISKANDAR (b. 1993)

Flute

mf

(with hand)  
1. Note with normal head - bass tone  
2. Note with 'x' head - closed slap tone

2 Congas

Piano

mf

Steel-string Acoustic Guitar (with pickup)

continue "tuning"

mf

f

Violin

mf

f

continue "tuning"

Viola

mf

continue "tuning"

Violoncello

mf

7

Fl.

f

accel.

2 Cong.

mf

Pno.

S.s. Ac. Gtr.

Vln.

mf

f

Vla.

f

Vc.

f

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Figure 7 Mm. 1-13 of the *Sulawesi* movement.

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The music of *Tari Tepak Sirih* is the source of inspiration for the third movement, *Sumatra*. The dance is a new form of traditional dance which originated from the Rokan Hulu regency in the province of Riau.<sup>23</sup> The dance (and its music) is a modern traditional-style modified rendition arranged by Riko Setiawan and M. Syukron to replace the former *Tari Persembahan* (trans. *Offering Dance*). It was premiered in January 2019 during a cultural art performance at the Convention Hall Masjid Agung Islamic Center Rohul, Pasir Pengaraian.<sup>24</sup> Both dances, however, have common goals, which are to preserve the Malay culture and to welcome respected guests. The difference lies in the fact that the *Tari Tepak Sirih* and its music is believed to reflect more the Malay culture within the local tradition of the people of Rokan Hulu. The dance music itself is characterized by having a pure traditional Malay musical feel or atmosphere with moderate pace in tempo, subtle dynamic contrast between musical sections, and simple rhythms. Musical instruments which are used in the music of *Tari Tepak Sirih* are a mixture of Western and local instruments—vocals, flute, violin, cello, gong, *gambang camar* (idiophone), *bebano* (membranophone), and *darbuka* (membranophone) (Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Rohul, 2019). One of the most recognized features of Malay music is the frequent presence of decorative melodic turns. Iskandar applies this feature in many parts of the *Sumatra* movement, such as shown in Figure 8.



Figure 8 Decorative turns of the flute in *Sumatra* movement (m. 1, m. 4).

Source: *Indonesian Suite*, by Nathan Iskandar, page 29.

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<sup>23</sup> "Tari Tepak Sirih Kabupaten Rokan Hulu Provinsi Riau," Dinas Pariwisata dan Kebudayaan Rohul, YouTube video, January 24, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY7VhW\\_tjyM&t=135s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY7VhW_tjyM&t=135s).

<sup>24</sup> "Representasikan Budaya Rohul, Tari Persembahan Diganti dengan Tari Tepak Sirih," Cakaplah, Accessed in January 15, 2019, <https://www.cakaplah.com/berita/baca/32679/2019/01/15/representasikan-budaya-rohul-tari-persembahan-diganti-dengan-tari-tepak-sirih#sthash.AgnHkPo4.dpbs>.

Furthermore, a movement referencing Malay musical style would not feel complete without the presence of a vocal chant in the style of the Islamic call to prayer (both Malay culture and Islam have strong historical connections). Figure 9 shows how Iskandar realizes this musical characteristic in the introduction of the mezzo-soprano line and Figure 10 illustrates how this line fits into the full ensemble texture.

Indonesian Suite, III. Sumatra, mm. 51-54  
Nathan Iskandar

Mezzo-soprano

$\text{♩} = 69$  *screeching chanting*  
*f*

Aaa... Na na na

na Na na na Na na na na

Figure 9 Vocal chant in *Sumatra* movement. From *Indonesian Suite*

Source: *Indonesian Suite*, by Nathan Iskandar, page 34.

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In each of the remaining movements, Iskandar takes a similar approach in adapting elements from the original “welcoming dance” music by borrowing pitch and rhythmic patterns as well as referencing some of the unique musical timbres and instrumentation of one particular “welcoming dance,” then transforming those elements into a larger form of musical piece. The richness of traditional Indonesian dance music and its amenability to adaptation into new contexts as shown in Iskandar’s *Indonesian Suite* demonstrate that it can serve as another valuable source of inspiration for future Indonesian-influenced contemporary compositions.

## Implications and Conclusions

The adoption of folk song themes in Sukarlan’s *Rapsodia Nusantara* and the integration of musical elements from traditional Indonesian “welcoming dance” music in Iskandar’s *Indonesian Suite* discussed in this article illustrate that there are numerous ways that composers can draw inspiration from and incorporate elements of Indonesian traditional music beyond the gamelan. Although the gamelan’s global popularity can in some ways be considered a blessing for the nation of Indonesia, to look solely at the gamelan as a source of musical inspiration is to look at only one of the many perspectives or styles within Indonesian traditional music, a large number of which have great potential for further exploration. This article has pointed out how many traditional Indonesian musical instruments and styles can be found from each province of the archipelago outside of Java and Bali. We have also seen how Ananda Sukarlan is bringing some of these traditions to the international stage through the incorporation of various Indonesian folk songs in his *Rapsodia Nusantara*. And finally, Nathan Iskandar’s *Indonesian Suite* introduces another approach where the composer adapts musical elements from the traditional “welcoming dance” music of the eight major areas of the Indonesian archipelago, each with its own unique characters and colors. It is our hope that the pieces examined in this article will serve as examples that help encourage composers to produce more works in various styles and instrumentations that showcase the great diversity that exists within the field of Indonesian traditional music.



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